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Remarks/Arguments:

In the February 21 office action, the Examiner is rejected claims 11 to 13 as obvious over the disclosure of Kara et al (US-6429777) in view of Windel et al (US-5671146). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The claimed invention requires inter alia the features of generating a modified key for each mail item by utilizing a stored secret key and postage data which includes the postage value relating to postage charges dispensed in a determined period of time in which postal indicia are to be printed on a plurality of mail items, and utilizing this modified key to generate an authentication code.

As noted by the Examiner, Kara et al makes no disclosure or suggestion of a method or apparatus which utilizes a modified key in the manner as required by the claimed invention.

In this connection, the Examiner has cited Windel et al. [column 19, lines 1 to 5], and is alleging that the claimed invention is obvious from the teaching of Kara et al in view of Windel et al. This is not the case.

Windel et al. does disclose the modification of a DES key, but this modification occurs only when the communication and accounting routines do not sequence within a predetermined time [column 18, line 65 to column 9, line 2], which allows for detection by the remote data center [column 19, lines 4 to 7] and prevents data communication [column 19, lines 19 to 21]. Such modification of the DES key is entirely different to the key modification as required by the claimed invention.

Windel et al. makes no disclosure or suggestion whatsoever of the generation of a modified key for each mail item in the manner as required by the claimed invention,

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and certainly not to the utilization of that modified key for the purpose of generating an authentication code.

Furthermore, Windel et al makes no disclosure or suggestion of the generation of a modified key which is based in part on postage value relating to postage charges dispensed in a determined period of time in which postal indicia are to be printed on a plurality of mail items.

It is important to recognize that the present invention is not directed broadly to any modification of a secret key, but the generation of a modified key for each mail item, and that each modified key is generated in a particular manner, of which there is absolutely no suggestion in Windel et al.

In summary, it is submitted that the subject-matter of claims 11 to 13 is patentably distinguished over the disclosure of Kara et al when taken in view of Windel et al.

Respectfully submitted,



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